
A New Species of *Oplonia* (Acanthaceae) from Southern South America

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ABSTRACT. A new species of *Oplonia* from the province of Jujuy, Argentina, *O. jujuyensis*, is described, illustrated, and compared with its closest relative. It differs markedly from *O. hutchisonii* by the corolla, which is weakly zygomorphic, and by the erect limb, with the posterior lip deeply two-lobed. This is the first report of this genus from Argentina.

The present study of the Acanthaceae for the flora of the Province of Jujuy, Argentina, has led to the recognition of a new species of *Oplonia* from that region. The genus belongs to the subfamily Acanthoideae tribe Odontonemeae in accordance with Lindau's (1895) infrafamilial classification of the Acanthaceae, or in the tribe Justiceae subtribe Odontoneminae if one prefers to follow Bremekamp's (1965) system of subfamilial classification. It is characterized by flowers that are either solitary in the leaf axils or borne in comparatively few-flowered axillary fascicles with minute bracts. This much reduced inflorescence distinguishes *Oplonia* from *Odontonema* Nees, the latter of which has flowers borne in terminal racemes or panicles. The corolla is zygomorphic, occasionally only weakly so, with a slender tube and a two-lipped limb, the posterior lip is two-lobed and the anterior lip is three-lobed. There are two stamens, which may be exerted or included, and two staminodes. Presently, two species are known from northern Peru, eight from the West Indies, and five from Madagascar. This is the first time that the genus is reported from Argentina.

Although the genus *Oplonia* is easily recognized and defined, the delimitation and distribution of the taxa are more complex and somewhat unusual. Most species grow in dry open habitats as part of scrub forest. The new taxon is found in thicket of transitional forest between the Chaco and Yungas (sensu Cabrera, 1976). The evolution of the genus (Stearn, 1971) would appear to be from a mesophytic spine-

less South American ancestor, resembling the small-flowered species of *Odontonema*, by progressive reduction in leaf size, by the contraction of the inflorescence from a narrow panicle or raceme into a few-flowered axillary fascicle or solitary flower, and by the conversion of lateral branches into spines, by which changes they became xerophytic. We believe that *Oplonia jujuyensis*, with its reduced leaves, an inflorescence of few flowers in axillary fascicles, small, *Odontonema*-like flowers, and habitat represents an isolated transition between the genera *Odontonema* and *Oplonia*.

Oplonia jujuyensis Wasshausen & Ezcurra, sp. nov. TYPE: Argentina. Jujuy: Depto. Ledesma, Parque Nacional Calilegua, near the road to Mesada de las Colmenas, 850 m, 9 Aug. 1985, *Iudica & Ramadori 91* (holotype, SI). Figure 1A-E.

Frutex vel suffrutex, 1.5 m altus, ramosus, inermis, caulibus teretibus cupraceis vel pallidis nitidis cortice exfoliato; foliorum laminae ovato-ellipticae 4-10 cm longae et 3-4 cm latae utrinque attenuatae glabrae; floribus axillaribus fasciculatis, geminis ternisve brevissime pedicellatis; bracteolis 1-2 mm longis subulatis brevibus; corolla alba late tubulosa 15 mm longa, labis subaequalibus, superiore profunde bilobato, lobis ovatis vel obovatis, inferiore prope basim trilobato, lobis superioribus similibus leviter latioribus; staminibus sterilibus brevibus; capsula ignota.

Branching shrub or subshrub to 1.5 m high; stem erect, cylindrical, the bark pale or copper-colored, exfoliating, glabrous, with prominent leaf scars; spines absent; leaves opposite, petiolate, the lower leaves often fascicled and on short axillary branches, reduced, deciduous toward base, the blades elliptic-ovate, 4-10 cm long, 3-4 cm wide, acute and acuminate, narrowed at the base and decurrent on the petiole, membranous, entire or undulate, glabrous, the cystoliths prominent under a lens; petiole 10-13 mm long; flowers 2-3 in sessile dichasia,

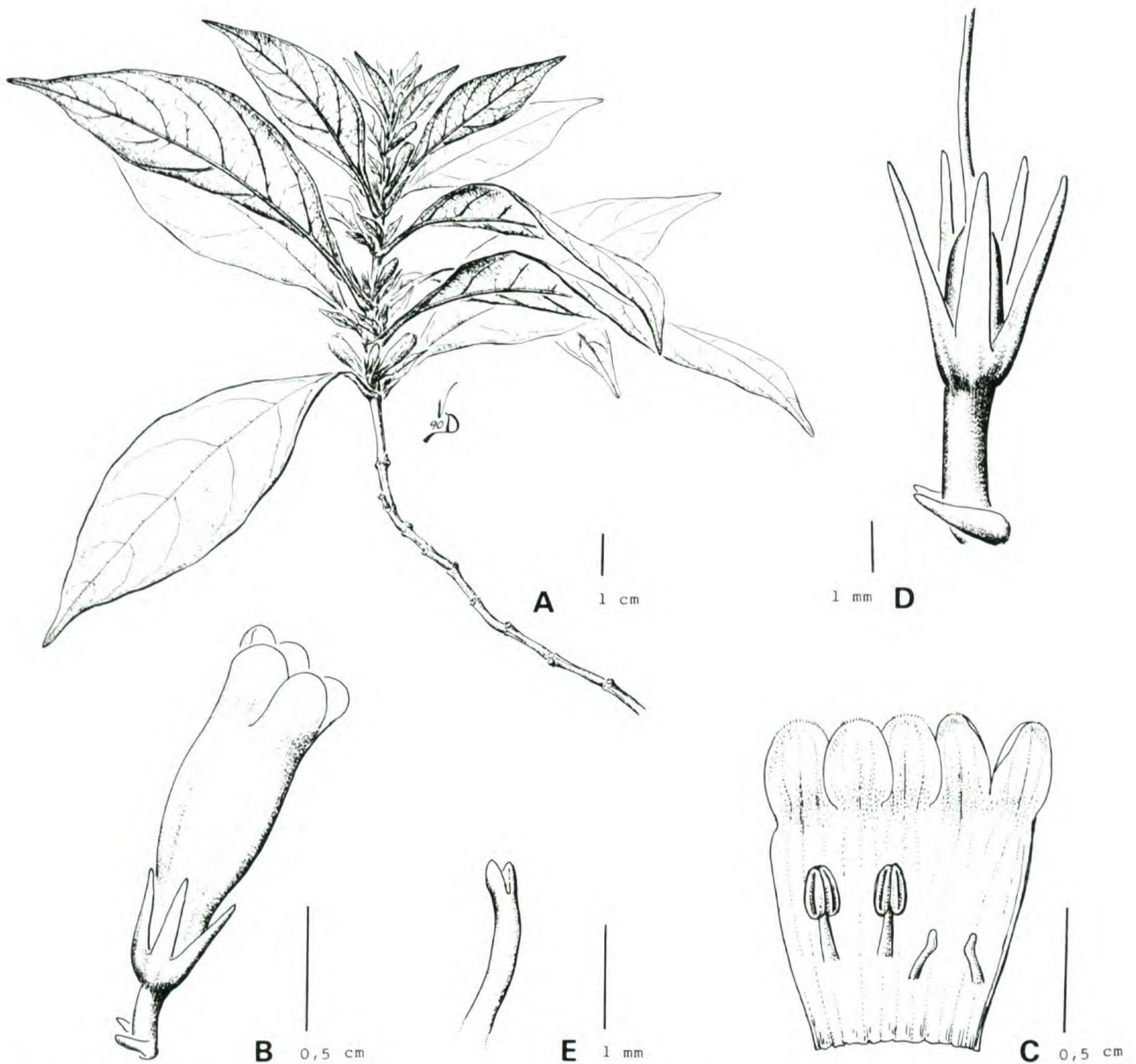


Figure 1. A–E. *Oplonia jujuyensis* (Iudica & Ramadori 91). —A. Habit. —B. Bracteoles, calyx segments, and corolla. —C. Corolla expanded, stamens, and staminodes. —D. Bracteoles, calyx segments, ovary, and style. —E. Portion of style and stigma.

occasionally reduced to 1 flower subtended by 2 bracteoles, borne in the axils of the upper leaf blades; bracteoles triangular, small, 1–2 mm long, glabrous or puberulous; calyx 3–4 mm long, the segments linear, ca. 3 mm long, 1 mm wide, subulate, puberulous or glabrous; corolla white, tubular, puberulent within at the base of the tube, glabrous without, 15 mm long, the tube 12 mm long, 1 mm wide at the base, gradually expanded to 3.5–4 mm diam. at the throat, the limb erect, the posterior lip deeply 2-lobed with the lobes ovate to obovate, 3 mm long, 1.6–2.2 mm wide, obtuse or rounded at apex, ciliate along the margins, the anterior lip similar only the lobes slightly larger, 2.2–2.5 mm wide; stamens included, inserted near the middle of the corolla tube; filaments 2.5 mm long, glabrous; anthers 1.5

mm long, the thecae subequal, mucicous; pollen grains spheroid, $36 \times 33 \mu\text{m}$, 3-colporate, each colpus flanked by 2 pseudocolpi, pitted with minute lumina (Fig. 2A–B); staminodes 2, minute, 1–2 mm long; ovary glabrous, 2 mm long; stigma slightly bifid. Capsule wanting.

Distribution. Growing in thicket of foothills of transitional forest between the Chaco and Yungas.

Oplonia jujuyensis is not closely allied to the other known species of *Oplonia*. It is perhaps nearest in relationship to *O. hutchisonii* Wasshausen from the Department of Amazonas, Peru; however, this species is unique in that the corollas are much smaller (8–8.5 mm long), strongly zygomorphic with the posterior lip shallowly two-lobed and the lobes

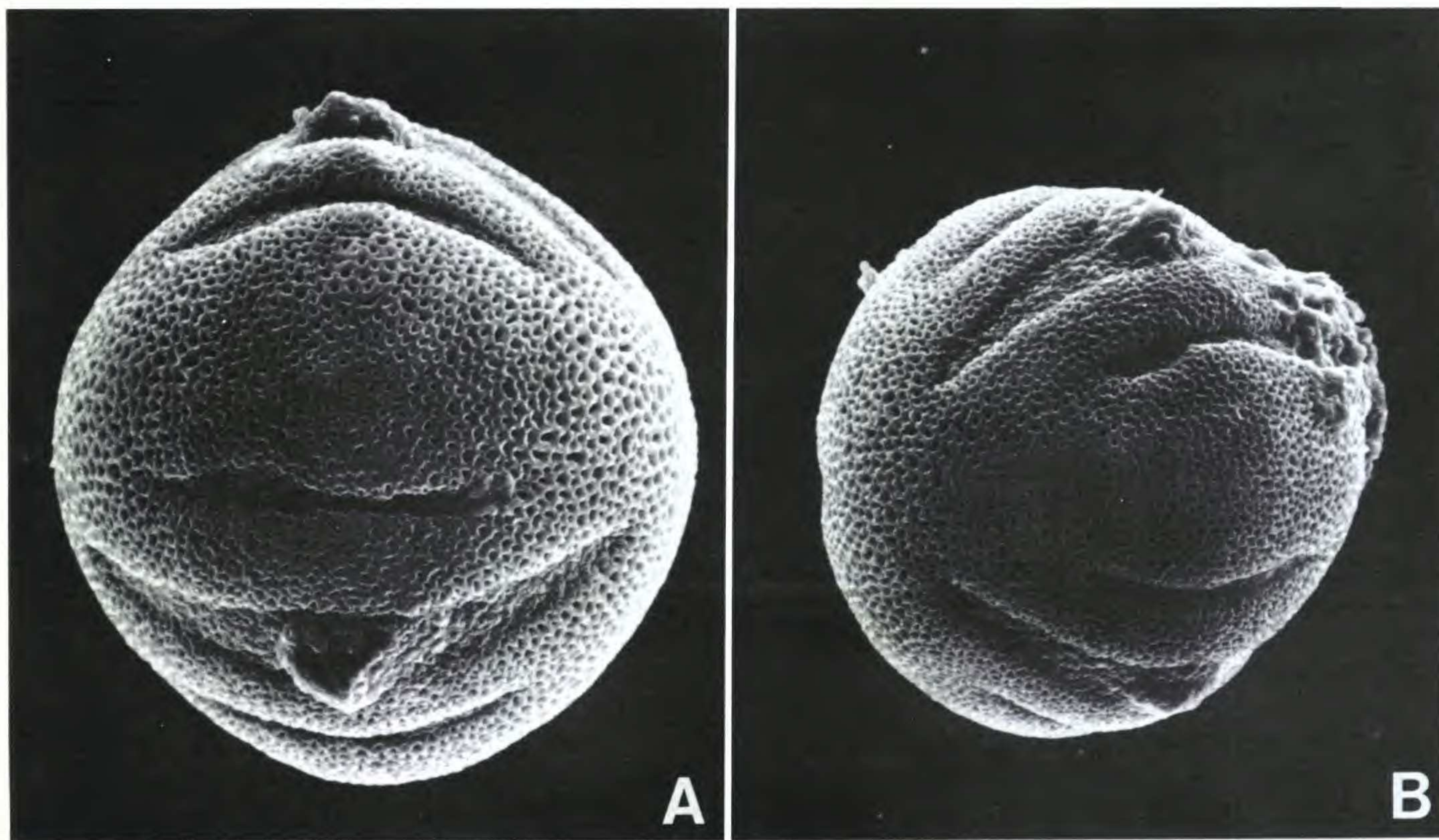


Figure 2. A, B. Scanning electron (SEM) photomicrograph of *Oplonia jujuyensis* (Iudica & Ramadori 91). —A. Equatorial view, $\times 1,700$. —B. Polar view, $\times 1,500$.

of the anterior lip spreading, 7–15 flowers are borne in sessile axillary fascicles, and the pollen grains are prolate, $66 \times 36 \mu\text{m}$, not distinctly pitted with minute lumina. In contrast, *O. jujuyensis* has corollas 15 mm long, these weakly zygomorphic with the posterior lip deeply two-lobed and the lobes of the anterior lip erect, 2–3 flowers are borne in sessile axillary fascicles, and the pollen grains are spheroidal, $36 \times 33 \mu\text{m}$, distinctly pitted with minute lumina.

Paratype. ARGENTINA. SALTA: Depto. Gral. San Martín, Quebrada de Capiazuti, Schulz & Varela 5378 (CTES).

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